

Role of the Animal Health Branch

January 2010

Origin of the Animal Health Branch

The legislature established the office of the California State Veterinarian in 1899 to "protect the health of all domestic animals of the state". Though the functions of the Animal Health Branch (Branch) have diversified in response to changes in agriculture and public health, its mission remains the same. The Branch is the State's organized professional veterinary medical unit that protects livestock populations, consumers, and California's economy from catastrophic animal diseases and other health or agricultural problems to help ensure available, affordable and wholesome food. The staff focuses on diseases and problems that cannot be successfully controlled on an individual animal or herd level, but require statewide coordinated resources.

Animal Health Programs

The Branch has several programs to protect California's livestock and poultry industries, including, animal production food safety, biologics, emergency preparedness, equine medication monitoring, and livestock health management. The Branch uses the Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory System, with laboratories located in Davis, Turlock, Tulare, and San Bernardino, and private laboratories and veterinary clinic laboratories for disease testing.

Animal Production Food Safety Program

The goal of the Animal Production Food Safety Program is to reduce the risk of physical, chemical or microbial contamination of food at the farm and in distribution channels. Branch staff assist veterinarians and producers to assess biosecurity and apply programs to ensure quality milk and meat products.

Biologics

California operates the only federally approved Biologics Program in the country. The legislature established this program in 1974 following the 1971-72 Exotic Newcastle Disease outbreak in Southern California. The program licenses biological products to meet the unique needs of California's livestock and poultry industries.

Emergency Disease Program

The Branch's highest priority is protecting California's livestock industries against emergency diseases and disasters. Staff prevent, detect, contain, and eradicate emergency diseases through outreach and education, disease surveillance and investigation, movement controls and disease eradication.

Equine Medication Monitoring Program

In 1971, the California horse industry sponsored legislation to deter the misuse of drugs and medications in show and sale horses. Staff coordinate a statewide testing program to deter the use of drugs and medications altering the performance and behavior of horses at shows and sales.

Livestock Health Management Programs

The Livestock Health Management Program coordinates statewide activities to prevent, control, and eradicate certain domestic diseases of cattle, sheep, goats, swine, poultry, and farmed deer through cooperative industry-state-federal programs and livestock movement controls. Branch staff coordinate surveillance programs for: Tuberculosis, Brucellosis, Pseudorabies, Scrapie, John's, Avian Health, Equine Infectious Anemia, Trichomonosis, Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy and Chronic Wasting Disease. Additionally, personnel monitor over two million animals imported into California each year.

Organization of the Animal Health Branch

The Branch headquarter's office is in Sacramento with Staff veterinarians specializing in veterinary regulatory issues. Four district offices are in Ontario, Tulare, Modesto and Redding. A supervising veterinarian oversees field veterinarians, livestock inspectors, and agricultural technicians in each district office.

When to Contact the Animal Health Branch

Protecting California's livestock is a partnership between livestock producers, veterinarians, and government agencies. Contact your local Branch office for information about:

- Emergency preparedness
- Veterinary accreditation
- Reportable diseases
- Brucellosis contracts
- Brucellosis and Tuberculosis supplies
- Tuberculin test responders
- Foreign animal disease suspects
- Livestock movement requirements

CDFA Animal Health Branch Offices	
Sacramento (HQ)	916-654-1447
Modesto	209-491-9350
Ontario	909-947-4462
Redding	530-225-2140
Tulare	559-685-3500
USDA/APHIS/VS 916-854-3900 or 877-741-3690	